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FRENCH NUCLEAR POLICY

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE STATEMENT IN PARIS ON FRANCE'S NUCLEAR POLICY:

VOICE: FRANCE IS NOT ONLY A NUCLEAR MILITARY POWER BUT ALSO PLAYS A KEY ROLE AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPORTERS OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY DESIGNED FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES. THAT ROLE HAS AT TIMES BEEN CONTROVERSIAL. CONSEQUENTLY, THE STATEMENT ISSUED MONDAY BY FRANCE'S HIGH COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN NUCLEAR POLICY HAS BEEN RECEIVED WITH GREAT INTEREST, PARTICULARLY BY THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

IT IS WELL-KNOWN THAT THERE IS A VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PEACEFUL AND MILITARY USES OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. A REACTOR IS DESIGNED TO PRODUCE ELECTRICITY, BUT WHEN THE URANIUM USED TO FUEL THE REACTOR IS REPROCESSED -- SO THAT IT CAN BE USED AGAIN -- PLUTONIUM IS PRODUCED, AND PLUTONIUM IS WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE ATOMIC WEAPONS. THE PROBLEM THAT HAS PLAGUED EXPORTERS OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES IS HOW TO ESTABLISH CONTROLS -- CONTROLS THAT WILL PREVENT THE TECHNOLOGY FROM BEING USED FOR MILITARY PURPOSES. IN THE UNITED STATES, THIS PROBLEM HAS BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED IN RECENT MONTHS, AND HAS EVEN BECOME AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

(OPT) THE STATEMENT FROM PARIS -- BY FRANCE'S HIGH COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN NUCLEAR POLICY -- WILL NO DOUBT BE WIDELY WELCOMED BY THOSE WHO SUPPORT CLOSER CONTROLS OVER THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. IT WILL BE ALL THE MORE WELCOME IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT FRANCE HAS NEVER SIGNED THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND HAS AT TIMES SEEMED BENT ON FOLLOWING A NON-COOPERATIVE NUCLEAR POLICY. (END OPT)

MONDAY'S STATEMENT AFFIRMED THAT FRANCE WOULD REMAIN IN CONTROL OF ITS NUCLEAR EXPORT POLICY. AND IT DID NOT INDICATE ANY CHANGE IN FRANCE'S CONTROVERSIAL DECISION TO PROVIDE PAKISTAN WITH A REPROCESSING PLANT. BUT IT DID CALL FOR AN END TO WHAT IT DESCRIBED AS "COMMERCIAL COMPETITION THAT ENCOURAGES THE PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS." IT INDICATED THAT IN THE FUTURE FRANCE WOULD BE READY TO STUDY "BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL" AGREEMENTS DESIGNED TO ESTABLISH GREATER SAFEGUARDS ON THE EXPORT OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. AND THE STATEMENT ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE AMERICAN PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING REGIONAL MULTINATIONAL CENTERS AS A WAY OF CONTROLLING THE REPROCESSING OF URANIUM.

THE FRENCH STATEMENT DOES NOT GO INTO SPECIFICS. BUT THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE WHICH IT REFLECTS WILL BUOY THE HOPES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WRESTLING WITH THE INCREASINGLY ALARMING PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION. (OPT) LAST WEEK THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE IN STOCKHOLM RELEASED A REPORT SAYING THAT THE PROBABILITY OF A NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST IS INCREASING BECAUSE OF THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE WORLD. IT ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT THIRTY-FIVE COUNTRIES WILL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE. IN VIEW OF THIS REPORT -- AND OTHERS OF ITS KIND -- THE NEWS THAT FRANCE NOW FAVORS IMPROVED CONTROL OVER THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL AND TECHNOLOGY IS CERTAIN TO BE WIDELY GREETED WITH INTEREST AND WITH APPROVAL. (END OPT)

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